

Abyssal A 131

Chapter 131 - 131: Killing Five Star Hunters

"Who else wants to throw their life away?" Alice asked as she narrowed her eyes at the Hunters.

But it was a bluff. Just killing the woman had taken most of her power in order to breach her defences. She could feel the power of the Blight Caller chewing through her body as she was holding back a cry of pain.

Just a single movement felt like thousands of worms chewing through her body never mind fighting at full force. As long as they back off, she'll be able to take Ria away to safety.

'How long will this power stay within my body?' Alice thought to herself as she took a deep breath and breathed out slowly.

She could see the three contemplating their options and they slowly backed away.

Seeing this, Alice felt relieved as she was going to do the same.

However, the moment she took a step back, she felt a chill down her spine as chains appeared in mid air and wrapped around her body.

Widening her eyes, Alice wanted to swap location with her familiar when a coffin appeared around her, locking her in place.

Her familiars had been destroyed by two of the Hunters as they launched the strongest attacks they could, wiping the beasts from existence.

***BANG!!!!**

Cracking through the coffin, Alice could feel a fist punching against her chest as her ribs fractured from the force.

"Arg!"

Crashing back, Alice gritted her teeth and slammed her hand against the Leviathan.

From its corpse, three familiars manifested themselves as they rushed towards the Hunters but it was futile.

All of them activated their resonance and appeared beside her at breakneck speeds.

Grabbing Alice by her arm, one of the Hunters swung her towards the other and launched a kick to the back of her knee, allowing the other to punch her against the head, giving her a concussion.

Letting out a cry of annoyance, Alice allowed her flames to run rampant as a dragon erupted from behind her, grabbing one of the Hunters by the head before throwing him aside.

"Fine! If you wanted to die then you should've just said so!" Alice shouted out in anger as this was a do or die moment. They had made their stance clear, and it was just a matter of surviving to the end!

'One of the Hunters can make a chain and coffin, seems like he's focused on preventing me from moving. Another is like Ria, power focused Hunter that uses their fists. And Fulton hasn't revealed his abilities just yet.' Alice thought to herself as she needed to focus on the chain and coffin Hunter first.

As long as he was dead, she'd be able to fight freely.

Swapping places with her familiar, she quickly grabbed a vial of healing blood before drinking it in one gulp, healing her wounds.

'The Blight Caller is a ranged fighter. All of the abilities I gained from it are focused on using my familiars to attack my enemies.' Alice thought to herself as it proved much harder to control than she initially expected.

Had it not been for the fact that she took them by surprise, she doubted she could kill the woman with the ghosts again.

Making two cuts along her arms, she conjured two familiars that erupted into fire and had them keep Fulton and the second Hunter occupied while she rushed towards the Hunter with the chains.

Twisting her body, she threw her sword at him before attaching a small familiar onto the handle, swapping positions at the last moment and swinging towards the Hunter.

Seeing this, the Hunter was able to step to the side and attempt to restrain Alice with the chains once more.

But this time Alice was prepared as she cleaved her sword vertically, slashing the chains apart.

To her surprise, the Hunter anticipated this outcome as he had jumped back, activating his third and fourth Sigil, conjuring a giant rosaria behind him with several coffins.

Realising that something was wrong, Alice did not hesitate and dashed towards him but it was too late.

From behind him, an angel like figure appeared with black tears streaming down her face. Opening her mouth, she released a loud cry as though she was singing an opera, causing Alice to take a step back while covering her ears.

Biting her lip, Alice created several dark orbs around the angel and attempted to pierce her with the attack but the coffins blocked it.

"Is it really worth losing your damn life over this?!" Alice shouted out, spitting some blood towards him and turning it into a small familiar to swap places with.

Appearing in front of the man, Alice was about to reach out when a black metal spear erupted from the ground around him, piercing her stomach and causing her to cough up a mouthful of blood from the wound.

"It's merely a matter of the consequences should I allow you to leave." The man shook his head.

Gritting her teeth, Alice pulled herself from the spear as she was about to attack him once more yet another spear launched out from the ground behind her.

Trusting her instincts, she ducked to the side before grabbing her dagger and slashing him on the side of the body.

She was unable to cut deeper as he had chains and spears protecting him yet she had attained her goal.

Jumping back, she conjured several familiars to circle the man as she was turning pale from the blood loss.

'One last vial of healing blood. After this, I'm out.' She thought to herself, as she took a deep breath and plunged her hand into the wound on her stomach.

Seeing this, the Hunter was shocked as Alice scattered her blood around them before curling her lips into a grin.

Activating her second Sigil, a marking appeared on her eye as a giant wall of fire erupted around them as she had her familiars scatter her blood into a wall. The reason she needed this was simple. She needed some cover so that what she did next wasn't seen by the others.

Bringing her dagger to her lips, she licked the blood and swallowed it.

Going through the same motion that the Hunter had done, Alice curled her lips up into a cruel smile as an identical rosaria appeared behind her.

But compared to the Hunter's it seemed 'corrupted' as it was under the influence of the Blight Caller and Alice's flames.

Seeing this, the Hunter couldn't believe his eyes as he froze up in shock but that proved to be his downfall as Alice manifested the Angel behind her.

Unlike the original Angel, Alice's angel had a dark crown floating around her head, a black blindfold with scars on her arms and neck. Curling her lips into a cruel smile, the Angel started to cry tears of blood as she released a cry infused with the power of Alice's second Sigil.

A wave of lethargy and powerlessness washed over the Hunter as his Angel and rosaria were shattered into pieces as his abilities were cancelled out.

Appearing in front of the Hunter, Alice grabbed her dagger and plunged it into the Hunter's throat before jamming her fingers into his eyes, rupturing his eyeballs.

Jumping over the Hunter, she kicked him in the back and forcing him to fall forward while still holding onto his skull through his eyes.

A window of opportunity appeared as she leaned in for the kill. All it took was turning her dagger into a stake before shattering the back of his neck and prying his head from his shoulders using her weapon.

With him now decapitated and taken out of the fight, Alice quickly collected some of his blood and stored it into her bag before the wall of fire disappeared.

She was grateful for her flames as that had allowed her familiars to fight against the other Hunters, buying her enough time to kill her opponent.

Quickly drinking her final vial of healing blood, she prepared herself for her next opponents.

As the flames died down, Alice narrowed her gaze towards Fulton who had killed her familiar and was now holding Ria by the back of her neck.

Upon seeing Alice sitting over his friend's decapitated body, Fulton gritted his teeth in anger.

He wanted to inflict the same loss for Alice, to kill Ria right here and now but he had his orders and he couldn't go against it. He had to bring Ria to the Young Master alive.

Just as Alice was about to dash towards Fulton, she felt her muscles tear apart within her body as blood poured out from her orifices. She could feel the power of the Blight Caller eating her from the inside out as her control over the ability had waned after her last fight.

Collapsing on her knee, Alice felt her vision blurring as countless whispers filled her ears. She couldn't even hear herself think as the voices resounded within her mind.

At first, it was unfamiliar voices but soon, she started to recognise the voices that belonged to her old family. The voices of her brothers, the servants and her father.

All of them started to become clear as it was as though the Blight Caller realised what brought a reaction out of Alice.

Seeing this, Fulton gestured to his ally who had just finished killing the familiar to kill Alice as her guard was down.

This was clearly a backlash of Alice's power as Fulton understood that she wasn't this strong originally when he saw her on the boat. If she was this strong, he would've noticed it.

Nodding his head, the Hunter dashed towards Alice as he pulled his punch back before punching towards Alice's face with the intent of smashing apart her skull in one punch.

***BANG!!!!**

Widening his eyes, the Hunter stared at the old man who had just appeared in front of him in horror as he felt like he had just punched an immovable object. The old man did not react at all to his punch and only scoffed in disdain.

Grabbing the man by his head, Gin sighed and threw him like a bullet, slamming against the corpse of the Leviathan and creating a new cavity.

"If you know what's good for you, you should let go of the girl." Allura's voice rang out as she tapped Fulton on his shoulder. There was a harmless smile on her face but Fulton felt like the weight of the world had just descended on his shoulders.

Cold sweat dripped down his back as the aura of death surrounded him. One wrong move and it was over.

Chapter 132 - 132: Aftermath Of The Hunt

Watching Allura take Ria from Fulton, Gin sighed out before glancing back at Alice.

Even though she had deployed a firewall to block what happened from being seen by others, he still saw her actions.

'She actually copied his powers like what she explained during the fight against the Cultist... I didn't think it was possible and an exaggeration but it's clearly not the case. Allura knows what's going on but she won't tell me unless Alice does.

With Ria being there at the fight before, she must've seen this as well.' Gin thought with a frown as he picked up Alice and poured a vial of healing blood into her mouth before turning to Allura.

"We should leave this place."

"Alright. Let me just deal with this guy first." Allura chuckled as she twisted her body and kicked Fulton into the Leviathan, knocking him out from the force of her kick.

Nodding her head in satisfaction, Allura felt proud of what Alice and Ria managed to accomplish.

Ria managed to help them infiltrate the hunting party without drawing suspicion and stole the kill from under their noses. Not only that, but she also achieved the highest contribution allowing her to obtain the Sigil she wanted.

As for Alice, she managed to protect Ria from a sure hit attack that couldn't be dodged and even killed two five star Hunters. A vast improvement from the time she fought against the Maiden.

'Seems like the lessons have paid off. She used what she learned from the training against the Maiden to dodge the attacks.' Allura smiled as she wrapped them in fire before launching into the sky.

Meanwhile, Haerun kneeled in despair seeing everything that had just transpired. Two unfamiliar people had arrived just before they could kill Alice and rescued them from danger. His guards were either killed or knocked out and he gained nothing in this trip.

The only saving grace was the fact that the entire corpse of the Storm Leviathan belonged to him. In the Law of Agreement, it was stated that should the hunt fail, he was to gain full ownership of the corpse and receive compensation.

But his mind wasn't on his compensation. No, he wanted to know just who had ruined his chance at a new Sigil and stole everything from him.

"Find out who they are! I want a bounty on their head the moment we get back!" He shouted in anger while punching the floor in anger.

Gritting his teeth, he ordered his men to collect the two five star Hunters who were still alive. They still needed to harvest the corpse before going back and it was going to take quite a while.

###

"Hello, young Hunter."

Alice could hear a haunting voice ringing against her ear as the darkness constricted her, stopping her movements.

Trying her best to break out of her bindings, Alice found herself unable to activate her Sigils to defend herself.

"It's no use. I must say, I'm surprised anyone would even dare to eat the essence of a Blight Caller. Activating it granted you power and taking a bite would extend the duration. Yet you decide to eat it whole. You truly aren't afraid of death are you?" The voice chuckled as Alice could see a moving shadow approach her.

It was the familiar figure of the Blight Caller that had overlapped her the first time she had activated this power.

"Oh, so many questions yet no answer. Your body is a trove of answers and knowledge I have no privy to. Had it not been for the cursed flames protecting you, I could've opened you up and taken a good look for myself." The Blight Caller cackled as she wrapped her fingers around Alice's chin.

Furrowing her brows, Alice tried to fight back by biting her fingers, but she pulled back in time.

"What? Are you scared?" Alice smiled but the Blight Caller shook her head.

"No. But you my dear, seem to misunderstand the dark realm. Such waste indeed. The Abyss always wins in the end. You can run, you can hide, but the Abyss always catches up to you. You may think you are safe from the consequences, but you don't know you are already drowning in the deep.

"One of these days, the dark mother will forever welcome you into her sweet embrace and you will become a beast that the Hunters fear. So, enjoy it. Enjoy it while you still can, the pleasure of drinking the blood of the dark realm without care. The folly that comes with becoming drunk with power beyond your control.

"Continue to savour the blood of your enemies, take their powers as your own and when all that is said and done, you will be dragged to the deepest pits of the dark realm and drown." The Blight Caller smiled ominously as the darkness slowly unravelled itself, releasing Alice from her bindings.

Finding herself back in her mind where she would interact with Cayla, Alice laid on her back and sighed heavily.

Clutching her chest, she could feel her heart rate increasing as she thought back to what the Blight Caller had just said.

The words were like a guillotine hovering above her head, ready to descend when she least expected it.

She knew the beast was right. That she was taking her powers for granted.

Had it not been for her body, she wouldn't have survived against the Cultists, wouldn't have survived against the Maiden and would've died against the five star Hunters.

But it couldn't continue like this.

Her 10 years of reckless consumption couldn't be controlled but her life was her own now. She needed to use her talents with careful consideration.

'Nothing is free in this world. There is always a dagger in the dark, ready to stab you. How long do I have until the side effects catch up to me?' Alice sighed as she covered her eyes with her forearm.

'I'll choose something less risky for my third Sigil. See if I can kill it with just my abilities without drinking too much Abyss Blood.'

Taking a deep breath, Alice calmed her mind as she opened her eyes to reality.

Looking around her, she could see that she was sleeping in a carriage.

Just as she was about to sit up, Alice could feel pain shoot through her entire body as she flinched and laid back down.

"What the hell..." She groaned, understanding that this must've been a direct result of her consuming the Blight Caller shard.

"Seems like you're awake. Allura and Ria are still sleeping so let's keep it quiet." Gin's voice rang out as he climbed onto the carriage and sat opposite Alice.

Glancing at Gin, Alice could see that he was deadly serious as confusion filled her mind.

"I want to ask you some questions. As Ria's grandfather, I want to know more about who I'm leaving her with. Mainly regarding your body condition and how you can even think about eating a Blight Caller Shard without care. But most importantly, how you recover so fast without any mutations or side effects." Gin narrowed his eyes as Alice felt a chill down her back.

While she was comfortable with telling Allura, she didn't interact with Gin as much. To her, Gin seemed to be akin to a supplier who happens to be Ria's grandfather and an Abyss Lord level Hunter as well.

She didn't know what he was like and while she understood that he was worried about Ria's safety, Alice couldn't bring herself to tell him about her condition.

Seeing that Alice didn't seem to want to say anything, Gin frowned slightly and sighed before taking a drink from his flask.

"Then answer me two questions that don't involve you revealing your secrets. First, if word were to get out that you can copy abilities by drinking someone's blood, would anyone come hunting you down? People from your past before you met Allura?" Gin asked but Alice shook her head.

"Copying abilities happened recently... It never appeared before." Alice replied truthfully.

"I see... Then what about your strange recovery? What if word was to get out that your body can recover quickly? Especially if you drink Abyss Blood or eat objects that are concentrated Abyss Blood?"

Hearing this, Alice was silent. She thought for a moment before opening her mouth.

"I think... People will hunt me down. My old family."

Scrutinizing Alice for a moment, Gin nodded his head before standing up.

"Keep your secret safe then. Ria is a good kid, she won't tell anyone. So I want you to make sure your secret doesn't bring her harm."

Without hearing Alice's reply, Gin stepped away from the carriage.

"You frightened her. Not very delicate are you?" Allura smiled as she was leaning against a tree.

"Can't help it. Even after all my years as an Abyss Lord, this is the first time I have seen something so strange. It violates everything I know about the Abyss." Gin sighed as Allura understood his worries.

"She said her old family would hunt her down if her secret got out. Seems like it's something the Zenia's kept hidden from the world."

"You did your research." Allura raised an eyebrow.

"Of course, I did. But just out of caution, I had my friends get some information for me instead of the Underground. Alice Zenia, date of death was her 10th birthday. The Zenia mansion was invaded by intruders of a rival noble family and several guests as well as family were declared dead.

Alice being one of them." Gin recounted as he remembers Ria telling him about how Alice had a panic attack after seeing the Zenia's appear in Zadash.

"The details on that day had been wiped clean. There are only a few rumours on what had actually happened during the attack. The people who died were reported but those who witnessed had their mouths sealed. Even after using interrogation Sigils, they wouldn't reveal anything.

"Afterwards, the daughter of the rival family was married into the Zenia's and the two entered a truce.

"And now... A person who is supposed to be dead shows up alive and talking to my granddaughter. Not only that, she gets a strange flame that burns away Abyss's powers and a body that recovers far too quickly." Gin sighed as he glanced back at the carriage.

"I don't know what happened that day but 'Alice' shouldn't be alive. Yet she's here."

"The Zenia's hid her existence. Simply as that." Allura replied, hiding the truth and Gin knew that.

Staring at Allura silent, Gin shrugged and leaned back.

"Then let's just hope the Zenia's won't cause trouble."

Chapter 133 - 133: Ria's New Power

"So what about your side of the investigation?" Gin asked as they both had a myriad of questions after witnessing the last battle.

For him, it was who Alice was. For Allura, it was regarding the Abyss Waters.

"Haven't heard much back but it's definitely changed. The reaction of the water is far too quick and almost instantaneous while before, it would kill the person first then transform them over the course of the next few days." Allura sighed as she remembered her own shock after seeing the transformation.

It was unnatural.

'Is the Abyss reacting to Alice's presence? Her existence and return of the Eye... If this is true then the Abyss might be preparing for revenge.' Allura thought to herself as too many things were happening outside of her control and despite all the power she wielded, all she could do was watch.

If this was the will of the Abyss, as a denizen, she could only comply.

"We should probably send word to the coastal cities and have them be careful about the waters. If they don't keep their guard near it, an outbreak of beasts could happen at any time." Allura suggested as Gin nodded his head.

With Gin now sending word out to the other cities, Allura made her way over to the carriage and saw that Alice was contemplating what Gin had said.

Sitting down next to Alice, she gave her a pat on the head, surprising Alice as she didn't notice Allura's approach.

"Don't think too much about it. Gin is just like that, prone to worrying. How's your body? I know I told you that you could snack on the shard if needed, I didn't think you would eat it whole though." Allura chuckled as that had also surprised her.

"Body still hurts a bunch. Probably because I ate the shard. But I heard strange stuff when I was sleeping." Alice shook her head as Allura raised an eyebrow.

"Oh?"

"Seems like the Blight Caller manifested itself in my mind. It was only briefly though. She said the Abyss always wins in the end, how I can run and hide but it'll always catch up. Will all of the side effects that should happen to me reappear in the future?

She said the dark mother will forever welcome me into her embrace and I'll become a beast." Alice sighed as she held her arms to stop herself from shaking.

If all of the side effects that came from 10 years of consumption happened all at once, what kind of monstrosity would she become?

Hearing all of this, Allura pulled Alice into her embrace as she patted her on the back.

"Don't worry. The Blight Callers are beasts of spite. They love to make their targets fear the unknown as that fuels their power. But there is truth in her words of caution. Your body is something we know very little about and having a mind of caution is a must have when dealing with something like this.

"The Abyss will always catch up. She is not wrong, but even I will find a way to help you, no matter how far you are. If you are in danger, I will sense it and come to your rescue." Allura comforted as Alice started to calm down and nodded her head.

"So what she said was true then? The Abyss always catches up?" Alice asked, curious as to what Allura meant.

"To a certain extent yes. The moment a person partakes in drinking the Abyss Blood, they have essentially entered a contract with the Abyss. In exchange for power, their corpses will be given to the Abyss to be use however it wants. The more you drink, the faster this contract is fulfilled.

There has... only been one exception to this rule but now it's become two if we include you." Allura explained with a smile.

"There was someone else? Who?"

"My master." Allura chuckled.

"She had a different kind of immunity compared to yours. But it was very similar. She could drink as much Abyss Blood as she wanted and never get the side effects. Instead, she would receive the benefits of the blood. Though unlike for you, her powers never really fade." Allura explained as she recounted the time her master was still alive.

"Did she use it often?"

"Nope. She found it unfair to her citizens. Unless she was forced to, she rarely used this power." Allura shook her head.

To her master, using such power was akin to laughing at her citizens who would suffer from the side effects.

But the reason she has this power is very different to Alice. If she had to put it cruelly, Alice was like an unholy imitation of her master.

'How did Alice even get this power...' Shaking her head, she had Alice get a bit more rest since she was still injured from eating the shard.

Ria hadn't woken up just yet and Allura assumed that she was still picking her Sigil since it hadn't appeared on her body just yet.

###

Back at the Zenia family, Luthor continued to stand over the repaired prison in silence. He looked at the pristine bed without saying a word. The family had been trying their best to track down Alice yet they haven't heard anything back yet.

"Father, you're here again." A voice rang out as Luthor sighed.

He was a handsome young man with short brown hair tied into a rat tail and golden brown eyes. He wore a black vest, white long sleeved shirt a blue tie and black pants. He was the first born son of the Zenia family, Albert Zenia.

"Have you gotten any news about her?" He asked.

"Nothing still. There's no sign of her anywhere. We don't know how they broke into the compound nor do we know how they got out. Their tracks just disappeared. No one has seen the beast. Do you think they went down to the Abyss?" Albert asked as Luthor contemplated the possibility.

While there should be no entrances to the Abyss near the Zenia prison, he couldn't rule out the possibility of it happening.

"Alright. Have your brother lead some men down to the Abyss. Unlike the surface, survival in the Abyss is harder so give him some strong guards." Luthor ordered as Albert nodded his head.

"How is your training coming along? Do you think you can graduate by the end of the year?" Luthor asked curiously as his oldest son was getting close to achieving his sixth Sigil. It was just a matter of time.

"It's coming along just fine. However, there are some complications on my end. Master had told me to clear my heart first."

"Keep me updated and give my thanks to your master." Luthor nodded as he watched Albert leave the room.

Looking back at the bed, Luthor sighed softly before looking at the memento of his deceased wife.

###

After talking with Allura, Alice went back to sleep and rested her body.

Once she woke, she could see Ria stretched her body by the side with a wide smile on her face.

"Oh you're up. Was I too loud?" Ria asked but Alice shook her head.

"Did you get the Sigil Allura said you should get? Or was there something better?" Alice asked curiously.

"Nope I went for the one that Allura mentioned. The others were nice in giving me more power over raw speed but the teleport is still too good to give up. On one hand, I can get absolute speed. The power to jump around the battlefield avoiding any attack I can and being able to fight longer will make my future hunts easier. On the other hand, it gives me absolute power.

Yet absolute power is worthless if I can't land a hit. Perhaps I'll look for something that'll boost my power as my fifth Sigil but for now, I chose speed. Ria chuckled as she continued her stretches.

"I see... Well you like to fight with your body so it suits you to have more speed."

"Yep, that's why we're going to test it now. Allura wanted me to show her everything I obtained with this fourth Sigil. Including my Anti Beast resonance." Ria smiled as the fourth Sigil was an Anti Beast synergy, making it so that she now owns 3 Anti Beast and one Anti Hunter Sigil.

Going by this pattern, Ria figured that her next two Sigils should be Anti Hunter synergy so that she has two resonances. Anti Beast and Anti Hunter.

Nodding her head, Alice was about to jump out of the carriage when a flash of pain shot through her body, causing her to fall face first against the dirt.

"Ouch..." Alice groaned as the side effects of consuming the shard lasted longer than she thought. It wasn't a mutation but rather her body healing her so that she didn't die.

"Yikes, you okay? Don't push yourself too much if you're still injured. Grandfather told me that your body is kind of in shambles after eating the shard." Ria furrowed her brows as she rushed over and helped Alice up.

"I'll be fine. It'll probably take a few days to heal but I want to see you spar with Allura first." Alice reassured as Ria helped her walk to where they planned to fight.

The location that they had chosen was in the middle of a clearing as it allowed them to fight freely without too much worry.

Sitting down on a rock, Alice felt awkward with Gin standing next to her as she could still remember their talk.

"Don't think too much about it. I'm not holding anything against you." Gin sighed as he focused on Ria and Allura who were standing in the middle of a clearing.

Placing a cigarette in her mouth, Allura scanned Ria up and down before curling her lips up into a smile.

"Let's see if you can force me to use more than three Sigils. And just so you know, very few have managed to achieve this." Allura chuckled as Ria nodded her head.

Without hesitation, she took a deep breath and activated all four of her Sigils as lightning erupted from her body.

She was going to start at full power by activating her newly obtained resonance!

Chapter 134 - 134: Ria's Resonance And Fourth Sigil

Activating her resonance, a pillar of lightning covered Ria's body as Allura whistled in surprise since the phenomenon created the activation was far greater than usual.

Stepping out of the lightning, Ria revealed her form in its full glory.

A set of white and blue armour wrapped around her chest, arms, waist and boots while a flowing white dress could be seen beneath the metal along with a pair of white stockings.

Iridescent blue crystals with gold lining decorated her armour.

Behind her, a golden halo made from lightning could be seen as Ria's eyes flickered with a violent blue.

Her hair was now the same colour as her lightning and fluttered behind her.

Adjusting her gauntlets, Ria snapped her finger and created a golden spear with blue and purple lightning.

Holding her spear with her right arm, Ria narrowed her eyes and aimed the spear with her left.

"Getting right into it I see. Alright, you can start whenever you feel like it." Allura chuckled and pulled her hands from her pockets.

Hearing this, Ria nodded her head and stabbed forward with her spear.

In that instance, her figure disappeared with a roar of thunder.

***BANG!!!!**

Stepping to the side, Allura was able to dodge with ease and kicked out with her leg but failed to hit Ria.

"I see... So that's how it feels. I was wondering how this ability works but now I get it." Ria muttered as she dismissed her spear.

The spear was not her ability, merely what she chose to manifest as a result. Now that she understands how it feels and functions, she could truly begin to experiment and demonstrate her power.

When choosing a Sigil, one must consider what it can grant you. The Hunter must understand the benefits of their current Sigils, what they can and can't do. Understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Once they understand this, their next Sigil should seek to improve upon their power or cover for their weaknesses.

For Ria, she chose the latter!

Her speed was already impressive but it was slow for beings of higher power. Her fight against the Champion showed her this. By choosing Lightning Ascent, not only has it increased her speed, but it has also indirectly increased her power as a result!

Taking a deep breath, Ria let out a shout as the skies changed and lightning descended upon her once more.

***BANG!!!!**

Striking down on her location, Ria's armour was chipped away until azure plating revealed themselves through the cracks.

Stomping down, Ria shot forward like a bullet as Allura widened her eyes in surprise before raising her arm to defend herself.

Feeling the force behind Ria's punch, Allura could feel the lightning trying to tear a hole through her body but it wasn't enough to breach her defences just yet.

Sliding back from the punch, Allura glanced up and noticed that Ria wasn't done.

There was now a mark on Allura's arm as Ria breathed out slowly.

Her Resonance was one that made up for her weakness of not having a decisive attack!

Dark clouds swirled above as blue and purple energy gathered towards the eye of the storm. Around them, rocks started to float up as Allura could feel her hair started to stand on its end from the static flowing through the space.

"My resonance allows me to grow my power exponentially and unleash it into an attack. It merely takes a moment to gather." Ria called out as Allura raised an eyebrow.

"Meaning, the more marks I apply, the stronger it becomes!" Ria shouted, appearing in front of Allura and launching an uppercut that was blocked easily.

Even though it was blocked easily, Allura could still feel the force behind the punch and it was not something an average four star Hunter could withstand!

'It's just the initial steps yet her power has already grown to this level?' Allura mused to herself, impressed by Ria's demonstration so far but it wasn't over.

Seeing a second mark appear on her hand, Allura decided to dodge the next attack by bending her body back.

Yet despite her dodging, a third mark appeared on her body.

"I don't believe I mentioned I had to hit you to apply a mark!"

Twisting her body, Ria launched a kick towards Allura's side before creating a spear in her spare hand and launching at her head.

Watching Allura dodge them both despite the speed, two more marks appeared on her body, bringing the total up to five.

With five marks now on Allura's body, Ria grew in power as her armour continued to break while cracks appeared on her body. A violent surging current of electricity flowed within her flesh as she appeared behind Allura and did a roundhouse kick that was blocked by Allura's leg.

A sixth mark appeared.

Quickly jumping back, Ria narrowed her eyes and slammed her hand into the ground.

Lightning chains jumped from the ground and latched onto Allura's limbs, preventing her from moving as Allura activated her Sigils in an attempt to break the chains.

However, despite activating three of her Sigils, the chains held firm, surprising Allura.

Looking up at the sky, she could see six coils of lightning forming above her followed by a flash of light.

*BANG!!!!

A swirl of pure electricity crashed down, shaking the grounds beneath before collapsing in on itself, forming an orb of destruction that erased everything within its area.

Looking up in shock, Alice couldn't believe that Ria wielded this much power. If it wasn't for Gin protecting her, she would've been caught within the radius of the attack!

From within the orb, it detonated for the third and final time, gathering all of the lightning from around them and exploding up into the skies, mimicking the effects of the Thunder Caller arrows that Ria had used to kill the Leviathan!

Jumping back, Ria panted heavily as she deactivated her resonance. As this was her first use, she wasn't able to adapt to the stamina drain just yet and all of her power had been exhausted.

Looking at the pillar of lightning, Ria noticed something from within and a swirl of fire erupted out, dispelling the lightning instantly. Black and red flames pushed out, shattering the lightning and revealing Allura standing calmly in the centre.

"While it wasn't a full activation, you still made me manifest a partial activation of my resonance. Not bad." Allura praised as the flames flickered around her body.

As it was just a partial activation, they did not solidify into armour and instead stayed as flames that protected her.

Dispelling her fire, Allura pulled out a cigarette before appearing in front of Ria.

"Urg... I thought I would've been able to force your resonance out but you didn't even activate the full thing." Ria sighed as Allura chuckled.

"Do you know how hard it is to make me use my resonance? The fact that you partially activated it means you reached the level where killing five star Hunters should be within your reach."

"Fair..." Ria pouted.

"So what did your resonance give you other than that final attack?" Allura asked curiously.

"My resonance's effects are interchangeable. If I decide to have it buff my body, it raises the cap of how many charges I can activate within me by decreasing the stress I apply to my body. If I decide to use it as an attack, I can create a field where lightning attacks are more potent with each mark I apply. When I decide to buff my body I kind of go into debt I guess?

Once the period is over I'll be exhausted to the point I can barely move." Ria explained while using her hands to convey what she was trying to say.

"I see... Seems like you'll be using the attack function of your resonance more often as it carries significantly less risk." Allura nodded as she turned to Gin.

"Well? What's your verdict on Ria's performance? I'd say she's pretty much ready to journey without us having to watch over her. Thankfully, Alice will be there to deal with her directional issues." Ria chuckled as Gin was silent before sighing out.

"Yes, she is indeed strong enough to protect herself." Gin scratched his hair and walked over to Ria.

Looking at her, he couldn't help but feel a swirl of emotions in his chest as she had grown up so quickly. It was already time for her to journey on without his protection.

"Don't worry grandfather, I'll be fine. It's not like we go around picking fights all the time and it'll just be a simple journey to the mainland. We'll probably go say hi to Luke on the way there." Ria grinned as Luke was the friend that she had mentioned to Alice before.

He was someone who valued his studies and was currently studying Abyss Engineering at one of the academies closer to the mainland.

"Hmm... He should be close to graduating from his studies no? Maybe ask him if he wants to join you two to the mainland." Allura suggested as he was the one that she had in mind.

Ria was a front-line fighter while Alice was a backline fighter and controller with her flames. As for Luke, his Sigils are a little different compared to the usual ones chosen by Hunters but he'll work perfectly in a supportive role for these two.

"Oh! In that case, then let's go there first then. We can also see what kind of gadgets he's been making since he's quite smart." Ria smiled excitedly as she couldn't wait to see an old friend.

"Alright, but before you go anywhere I want you to take this." Gin interrupted as he snapped his finger. A small bone snake appeared in his palms before transforming into a bracelet.

"It contains a bit of my power so if anything dangerous was to happen, it'll be able to protect you." Gin explained as Allura walked over to Alice so that she could do the same.

Creating a small flame above her fingers, she condensed it into an amulet and handed it to Alice.

"Same usage as what Gin made for Ria. Though it's a one time use so keep that in mind. Also don't even think about eating it since I don't think your body can handle my power." Allura warned seriously.

Seeing that Allura was giving her the hard no, Alice understood the dangers this could bring and made a mental note in her mind not to drink the blood of people who are far above her level.

Chapter 135 - 135: Allura And Gin's Departure

With Gin and Allura both giving them an item to save their lives should they face a danger they couldn't handle, Gin was still reluctant to leave.

It wasn't until Ria urged them to go did Gin finally sigh and left while Allura did the same but not before leaving some words of caution along with two maps for them to use on their journey.

Now that they were journeying on their own, Ria stretched her body before letting out a sigh.

"Right then, is there anywhere you want to go? We're free to go anywhere now." Ria asked as she laid out the map.

"I don't really have a place in mind. Weren't we going to go straight to your friend, Luke?" Alice tilted her head since she wasn't familiar with the Abyss nor did she have a destination in mind.

Her only goal right now was to get stronger and erase her old family. To her, the destination did not matter so long as she could train and get more Sigils.

"Hmm... Okay! Luke is attending an Academy pretty far away from us so we'll need to take a few rests on the way there. The first stop will be Valentia, it's a pretty religious city for the Church of the Moon. However, they have good Hunter requests there where we can earn some travel funds.

It's mostly to do with bringing beasts to the Church and they give you some good rewards for them." Ria suggested as Alice was slightly on the fence about this.

With Church of the Moon and the Zenia being close to one another, there was a chance that the Zenia's could be there and they run into each other.

"Is there a place... less religious and possibly not tied to my old family?" Alice asked meekly as she felt a bit awkward saying no to Ria's suggestion.

"Ah right, sorry I completely forgot about that." Ria apologised as she slapped her own head, realising the issue with the first destination.

"Alright let me see hmm... If we travel north bound towards the mainland, we can go to the free city of Isilvaria instead. Like Zadash, it's a Hunter orientated city but all three Churches appear there.

However, it has one of the biggest free markets without going to the mainland so we can get some equipment and supplies there without issue." Ria suggested, pointing at Isilvaria which was located on the map.

"Free market?"

"Basically, it means the city lord doesn't intervene with the market. All of the prices, wares and so on are dictated by the merchants. If you're not careful you can be scammed but there are hidden gems there." Ria nodded her head with a smile.

Hearing this, Alice thought for a moment before agreeing.

"Do you think they'll be able to fix these gauntlets? It took a bit of damage and the mechanism is making noises that it shouldn't." Alice asked, pointing at her arm.

Her gauntlet had taken some damage during the fight against the Champion when she held onto to thread and hadn't been fixed since then. While it's been holding on well, Alice didn't want to push it if she could help it.

"Probably. There are a bunch of blacksmiths there that can have a look at the thing. You might want to hide the thread and your bracelet though, if the wrong kind of people see it, they might try to steal them from you." Ria warned.

"I know, don't worry." Alice reassured.

"Anyways, that doesn't change the fact that we still have to travel by foot for quite a while. We can probably get some food by killing some beasts and draining their blood carefully. Thankfully, grandfather has already taught me how to do it so we'll be fine." Ria reassured as Alice felt a little uneasy but nodded her head.

Even though Ria's directional sense was bad, she was here to cover for that weakness. On the other hand, Alice was clueless on surviving in the wild but Ria had the knowledge.

With the two of them working together, making their way to Isilvaria shouldn't be too difficult.

'Cayla hasn't responded to anything yet... Maybe she'll wake up when I get my third Sigil. Then again, Allura mentioned that she didn't want Cayla waking up too soon.' Alice sighed as she grabbed her version of the map and tried to pinpoint their location as well as what direction they were facing using the landmark.

With only the knowledge that they were on a cliff with the Abyss Waters behind her, it took them quite a while to find their location. And once this was known, the two set off through the forest in front of them to get back to the main roads.

###

"Still sad that she's going on her own now?" Allura smiled as Gin had wanted to watch over her one last time before leaving.

"Hush it. As someone who's been looking after her ever since I rescued her from the clutches of the Cult, it's hard not to worry about her safety no matter how strong she is. Even if she was to become an Abyss Lord in the future, I would still worry." Gin sighed deeply as his gaze lingered on Ria.

"Just how parental figures are I suppose." Allura shrugged with a smirk but Gin only rolled his eyes.

"You're no better. In fact, you're more sentimental than me despite having lived longer!" He retorted since he could clearly see her reluctance. She was just better at hiding it.

The fact that she had given Alice a life saving amulet infused with so much of her power proves that point.

Acting as though she didn't hear anything, Allura started to fly away from the area.

She knew that Gin was right. Even though it was brief, the time she had spent with Alice was enjoyable for her. A lost child in the Abyss abandoned by her own family.

A girl whose heart was fragile like glass and desperately fought to keep her feelings bottled up inside. Her wariness against the world that harmed her so.

And yet despite this, Alice decided to trust her, sharing her deepest secrets and exposing herself entirely.

It would be easy to recluse herself from the world, hiding in some unknown corner and not letting anyone approach her. Yet she took that step.

Allura saw this girl as family and not just one of the many that she would meet over the course of these long years. To her, Alice was irreplaceable, and she wished all the happiness in the world for her.

'*sigh... * I'm not even a mother and I feel like I'm watching a daughter leave the house.' Allura thought to herself. Alice was like a daughter to her rather than a disciple.

Shaking her head, she focused on the task at hand and that was to eliminate the hidden dangers that might be gunning after Alice due to her possession of the Eye. However, she had to be careful with her actions since one wrong move and it'll inform her enemies regarding the situation in the Abyss.

"So where are we going first?" Gin asked curiously.

"We'll be going to the frontlines. You know how battles are being waged between the three big religions with some powerful kingdoms trying to intervene. We'll be allying ourselves with the kingdoms as having the Churches get more powerful only spells disaster for everyone." Allura narrowed her eyes.

"The Church of the Sun's ultimate goal is to preserve the current world order but with them being in the centre. The Moon aims to have everyone worship the Goddess of the Moon in an eternal slumber where their physical bodies perish yet the mind and spirit lived on. The Cult wishes to plunge this world into constant bloodshed as a tribute to their lord.

If any of these three come out on top it'll become very difficult to stop them from doing whatever they want.

"The only reason why they haven't done so is because the God's Apostles are keeping each other in check. Having one being injured or fall in battle spells doom for the Church and if things get really bad, even the God themselves."

Hearing this, Gin furrowed his brows since this was the first time he had heard of such a thing.

"What do you mean?"

"When a God designates Apostles, they share a portion of their power to the follower. Should they fall, that power is forever lost. Apostles gain power for their Gods through belief and if your Church was to appear weak then the God loses power. If a God grows too weak, others can take advantage." Allura explained since she had personally seen Gods die in battle.

In the forgotten era, it was a constant war between the religions along with the outer Gods peering in, trying to invade the two realms that had merged as a result of the war.

Each religion wanted to become the dominant force yet the Sun, Moon and Eclipse were tied in power. The other religions fell short and so did their Gods.

Had it not been for the threat the outer Gods possessed, the three Religions would've fought until only one remained.

'I can't let that happen. Not again, I can't let such a battle break out while Alice and Ria are still weak.' Allura bit her lip as she knew such a battle was inevitable.

The Churches were growing their power precisely for this reason. Once they are strong enough to contend against the outer Gods while keeping the others at bay, all hell would break loose.

"Well, I'll be damned. Guess there's no room for Abyss Lords like us to interfere when Gods are on the playing field." Gin sighed since he knew his strengths and weaknesses. He had already seen a glimpse of the chaotic era to come after the White Death.

Soon, he too would become a relic of the past, old and broken.

"Which is why we need to even it out first before things escalate beyond our control." Allura chuckled.

She had to slow down the growth of the Churches so that Alice and Ria get the time they need to develop their own powers to survive an all out battle between religions.

Chapter 136 - 136: Carter

Panting heavily, a young man with short blonde hair could be seen running through the forest while using the trees to help him run.

He would weave through trees while jumping from branch to branch, not daring to slow down for even one second as doing so meant the beast behind him would be one step closer.

'I need to fight but my arrows aren't doing anything!' He cried out in his mind as this was not what he had planned at all.

Without looking back, he could tell the beast was getting closer with each passing second. The loud thuds of trees being shoved aside and falling to the ground were clear.

Biting his lip, the young man dove over a pile of logs and rolled across the ground before pulling out his bow and preparing an arrow.

Swallowing his saliva, the world was quiet as time seemed to stop. From within the forest, a large beast with dark grey fur and a silver mane appeared. It towered over the young man as he could see the three crimson jewels glaring at him full of fury and bloodlust.

Two demonic horns spiralled from its skull as the beast opened its jaws and let out an ear-rupturing roar, revealing two large canines that were far bigger than its other teeth.

The young man could see his reflection within the beast's saliva as despair gripped his heart yet in the next second, he watched as a girl suddenly appeared beside the beast.

She had flowing hair that danced with lightning and punched the beast across the face, shattering the teeth on impact.

*BANG!!!!

Following her arrival was the sound of thunder crashing around him as the force sent him flying back.

"Careful. There's a bystander here." Another voice called out as someone had caught him before he could crash into a tree.

"Sorry! Didn't notice him!" Ria apologised, causing Alice to sigh out heavily.

They had been travelling for over two weeks now and they had gotten lost. With Alice misinterpreting some of the key locations on the map, they've been wandering from forest to forest all this time, killing beasts and drinking river water to clear their hunger and thirst.

Yet without a proper place to stay, their outfits have become worn out and their hair was dishevelled.

"Sorry about that. If you don't mind, can you tell us where we are? We've been lost for quite a while now." Alice asked as she glanced down at the young man in her arms.

After spending all this time with Ria, she had become more fluent in her speaking and was able to speak more often while conveying the thoughts in her mind. Which also meant she had become quite blunt in her speaking habits.

"Ah yes erm. You're near the Blackrock Castle. Wait! No before that you need to go help your friend!" The young man replied before panicking, remembering how dangerous the beast was.

After all, that beast was a Nether Claw, a fearsome beast that shouldn't be in this part of the land. He had only just discovered the location of this beast not long ago otherwise he would've become a corpse on the ground by now.

"She's got it handled don't worry. It's just an overgrown cat, not even at five star difficulty too." Alice reassured as she gestured towards Ria who was now ducking and weaving through the Nether Claw's swipes and launching counter punches with a leisurely smile on her face.

She had been training on how to best use her power while in her resonance form so that she could extend the time she had with this power.

"What the..." Blinking his eyes in disbelief, the young man couldn't comprehend what he was seeing as this was a beast that was on the verge of tearing him in half two seconds ago. Now it was being thrown around like an amateur in a fighting ring.

"So where exactly is the Blackrock Castle on this map? It's a little dirty since we've been walking around for a while but it shouldn't be too bad." Alice asked, snapping her fingers in front of his face to get his attention. Sprawling out the map, she wanted him to show her where they were so that she could finally get them back on the road to their destination.

"But..." Furrowing his brows, the man glanced back and forth between Alice and Ria.

Seeing his hesitation, Alice scratched her cheek before standing up.

"Finish the fight quickly. This guy's not saying anything because he's worried that you'll get killed by that cat." Alice shouted out as Ria turned around and rolled her eyes.

"Really? This thing?" She asked, pointing at the beast behind her that tried to slam its claws down yet it was blocked by Ria's hand.

"I'm offended. Really? Do you think this thing is going to kill me? How so?" Ria questioned the young man as she threw the beast over her shoulder and summoned a bolt of lightning to crash down upon it. Letting out a cry of pain, the beast stumbled back before glaring at Ria.

The third eye positioned between his two eyes started to glow red as black scales stabbed through its flesh, forming a protective armour around its body while a pair of wings erupted from its back.

"It's the first time we've met a person in a while, let's make it quick." Alice complained, causing Ria to sigh and nod her head.

"Fine, it's partially my fault we got lost here anyway. Alright, give me two seconds then."

Stomping down, Ria dashed towards the beast as lightning surged around her arms. Arriving mere inches away from the beast, she placed her finger against its chest before forming a fist and punching out in one swift motion.

***BANG!!!!**

A spear of lightning erupted forth as it tore through the armour and flesh without any issues, creating a hole through the beast's body. Smoke and the smell of cooked flesh spread across the area as the beast collapsed on its side, dead before it could make a move.

"Alright, I've killed it. Happy now?" Ria shrugged, sitting on the beast and using it as a chair.

"Yep. So as I was asking, where are we on this map right now?" Alice nodded before turning back to the young man who was bewildered at everything that had just transpired.

"No wait, give me a moment to calm down." He took a step back, overwhelmed by the fleeting moments of life and death. He may have survived but death was about to welcome him into its cold embrace yet denied because of the two strange girls that appeared before him.

"And.... A moment has passed. Are you calm now? Where are we on this map?" Alice asked.

". . . Okay, let me have a look."

Glancing over the map, he noticed several red circles that had been crossed out in what seemed to be frustration before a giant question mark was scribbled onto the map.

"Erm... So here's Blackrock Castle. Even though I said we're near, that's only because it's the closest place to us. We're currently in the Great Forest of Kulia that stretches on for this entire section. If you want to get to Blackrock Castle, you'll have to travel for probably two days?" The young man explained as he pointed to their rough location on the map.

"Oh... two days? We'll probably miss the castle by accident then." Alice sighed as she rolled up the map and placed it in her bag.

Even though it could be classified as her 'bag', it was her cloak and other pieces of her outfit repurposed into a bag due to the damages caused to them.

No matter how durable the outfit was, with the fights she had gotten herself into along with the hunt against the Leviathan, it was surprising it had managed to last this long.

"Ria! We got a two days journey north. It's a place called Blackrock Castle and it should be pretty hard to miss." Alice called out.

Upon hearing that it was a two day journey, Ria groaned in fatigue as she laid on her back before letting out a deep sigh.

"Alright, let's get going then. Hopefully, we don't have to keep wandering around like this."

Seeing that they were about to leave without taking the corpse of the beast, the young man hesitated for a moment before opening his mouth.

"Are you not taking the carcass of the Nether Claw with you?"

"No need. Too much of a hassle and we just ate not long ago." Alice shook her head.

"Then if you don't mind waiting, I'll take this carcass back and I'll show you the way to Blackrock Castle." He offered.

Hearing this, Ria didn't hesitate to nod as she was more than happy to trade the body of a stray beast they killed for some direction.

"Lead the way, we'll carry the body for you since it might be too heavy." Ria reassured as Alice brought out a cleaver and started to chop the beast into large chunks for them to carry with ease rather than one large carcass.

Unsure as to where Alice had even pulled out such a large cleaver, the young man gathered some of the items he had dropped while he was running before leading the way back to his home.

His name is Carter and he's a Hunter as well as a woodcutter who lives in this forest with his family. Usually, the forest would be home to low danger beasts that he has no issues with killing as he had received some training from his father.

"My father passed away when I was young so it's just my old mother and my younger brother living in this forest. My brother keeps my mother company while I go out and hunt." Carter explained while Alice and Ria listened intently as it was a good change of pace after weeks of travelling and hunting.

However, he couldn't be considered a real 'Hunter' in the traditional sense as he didn't go out of his way to kill beasts nor does he own many Sigils. It's merely what's required for his way of life. He only possessed two Sigils belonging to weak beasts as his family couldn't afford a good Shaman nor was he dedicated enough to hunt the stronger beasts.

As they were listening to stories about Carter and his family, his house soon came into view as it was a humble abode hidden within the forest.

Chapter 137 - 137: Trip To Blackrock Castle

Carter's house was a medium sized house by the river and a large shed housing a domesticated beast with a carriage attached to it.

The beast was similar to the horses that she had seen in both Zadash and the Slaughter Docks and it seemed to be the go to beast for this kind of work.

"I'm home!" Carter called out with a smile as the door opened up to show a young boy who was barely half his size. Like Carter, the boy had blonde hair and stared at Alice and Ria curiously.

"They're my benefactors. They saved me when a large beast appeared." Carter explained.

"How was mother today?"

"She's okay. Mother worried about your safety." The boy replied, running back into the house.

"You can set the parts of the beast to the side by the shed. I'll clean it up and prepare it later. Please take a seat inside the house. I won't take too long." Carter offered as Alice nodded her head.

Entering through the door, Alice was about to continue when Ria grabbed her arm.

"You should probably take off your boots first." Ria suggested since she didn't want them to drag dirt into the houses.

"Eh? Why?"

"Because it's going to be dirty if you don't. Unlike the inn, this house seems well maintained so let's not be the ones to change that." Ria explained while taking off her own shoes.

Still confused by this, Alice only shrugged and took off her shoes.

Entering the house, they could see picture frames of what seems to be Carter's family when he was young. It showed his father and mother standing next to each other while Carter held his baby brother when he was just a child.

To their right was the kitchen and dining room while the left had the living room that was connected to the sunroom and a porch.

Alice could see Carter's younger brother sitting on the sofa and playing with some wooden figures that had been hand carved. Sitting next to him was an old woman with greying hair wearing a dark green attire with a blanket over her shoulders.

"Pardon the intrusion." Ria bowed slightly as the woman smiled.

"I heard that you're Carter's benefactors, can I get you something to drink or eat while you wait?" She offered but Ria shook her head.

"No, it's fine thank you. We're just taking a small break." Ria scratched her cheek as she felt rather awkward intruding in someone else's home without warning.

Meanwhile, Alice simply found a spare seat and sat down before leaning back.

Her eyes darted around the home curiously while seeing the pictures and small items placed on the walls of this home.

"Sorry for my friend." Ria apologised.

"Wait sorry for what?" Alice tilted her head in confusion as she was simply doing what she was told.

"It's a bit rude to just walk in and sit down without saying anything." Ria sighed, causing Alice to furrow her brows before standing up.

"Erm... Your son said we can sit down so we'll be resting for a little bit. We won't be long since he's just sorting out the beast meat outside."

Watching Alice sit back down again after her statement, Ria felt the urge to facepalm but decided to hold it in for now as the old lady chuckled at her antics.

"Oh it's fine. Please, make yourself feel at home. If you need anything to eat, you can find it in the kitchen." She smiled.

"See?" Alice shrugged while glancing at Ria. She wasn't sure why Ria was so concerned as they had already allowed them to relax.

Speechless, Ria could only sigh as she sat down and waited patiently.

Now that they were in a house and not living in the wild, they didn't need to worry about the dangers and were able to relax their nerves.

Alice was doing the same as she leaned back and closed her eyes.

During their travel, they had always ensured that one of them was always awake in case of an attack.

Even though they were strong enough to kill four star beasts, even weaker beasts could pose a danger in the right circumstances as Alice had learnt after her encounter in the forest where she first met Ria.

It reminded Alice that even though she could see the names above the beast's head, she still needed to learn about their habits and powers from the library or else just seeing their names wasn't going to be enough.

Knowledge is power and it eliminates the danger of the unknown.

While thinking about how knowledge was useful, Alice couldn't help but wonder about Nalem who had gifted her the weapon when she was back in Zadash. He had mentioned that he was going to close the store for a while after hearing about the White Death but the circumstances are unknown to her still.

'Does he have a deeper connection to the Abyss like Allura and Kaden? I know Allura mentioned that the White Death was unnatural.' Alice mused to herself since she too was an anomaly to the Abyss.

Her understanding of the Abyss is rudimentary at best due to what little education she received before she was locked away.

Hearing the door open, Alice opened her eyes and glanced towards the sound. Seeing that Carter seemed to be done with his preparations, Alice stood up.

"Are we leaving now?" Alice asked as Carter nodded his head.

"It's a little earlier than usual for me but it's a good time to sell the meat of the beast along with the other parts of its body." Stepping into the house, he explained the situation to his mother and brother as it'll take around 4 to 5 days before he gets home due to the distance needed.

In the meantime, his mother and brother will be staying at the house waiting for his return.

For him, it was always nerve wracking to leave for this long and it was the same for his family but it was necessary.

With Carter saying goodbye to his family, Alice and Ria took this time to sit down in the carriage and noticed that he had placed several logs of wood along with other items to sell.

"Is this how normal people live?" Alice asked curiously since she had only known two lifestyles. The first as a prisoner of her family. The second as a Hunter who hunts beasts, either eating them or selling them to the Guild.

"Pretty much. Though most would be living in the city and wouldn't need to travel that far." Ria shrugged. She couldn't comment much on the topic as she was in a similar situation, only having known two kinds of lifestyles, one of which is being a Hunter.

"Sorry for the wait, saying goodbye is always hard when I have to travel this far. We'll be camping out at night but I don't think that'll be an issue for you twoahaha." Carter smiled as he climbed into the driver seat and grabbed the reins.

"Don't worry about it. Once night falls, you can sleep since me and Alice will be keeping watch." Ria waved her hand as Carter nodded and gently whipped the beast.

As the beast pulled the carriage, they made their way through the forest and Alice took this time to rest by laying down on the carriage seats.

"So where were you two originally from?" Carter asked curiously since they had a two day journey ahead of them.

"Slaughter Docks. Was a slave there." Alice replied bluntly. Strictly speaking, the Slaughter Docks was the closest place of origin as she didn't know where the Zenia family was located on the surface. She just knew that she was held within the prison.

"I came from Varesa then I went travelling across the Abyss with my grandfather and mentor." Ria followed up.

"Woah, isn't Varesa on the other side of the continent? You must've been travelling for a long time then." Carter remarked as they were currently located in the southern part of the continent while Varesa was located in the northwest.

"Been travelling for quite a few years now. Never really had a place to settle down. Plus, we're Hunters, we don't usually settle down in one place." Ria chuckled. She was a fan of the travelling life as it doesn't

feel stagnant. To her, life should be like a rushing current, full of energy and excitement as she travelled from place to place.

"I see... Sounds like an interesting life. Doesn't fighting every day scare you though? I hate to admit it but I'm quite fearful of pain. I can't imagine myself brawling or fighting with powerful beasts on a daily basis. The ones I hunt for food are animals if you ignore a few strange properties they carry."

"I mean you get used to it. Right Alice?" Ria shrugged as she turned to Alice.

Out of the two of them, Alice was the most fearless one due to her past of being mistreated by her family. She didn't know the full details but the fact that she could stare death in the face and laugh was a clear sign that she was used to extreme scenarios.

"Mnm. If you get stabbed in the gut a few times you won't be scared since its nothing you haven't felt before. It's kinda like walking into a dark room with a bunch of beast traps on the floor. If you can't see them, you're scared and you take your time moving through the room.

But if the room is lit up and you can see where they all are, you just walk through." Alice explained as her past experience in the Zenia family, when paired with her training with Allura, made it so that she wasn't afraid of fights in general nor was she afraid of pain.

It was simply something she had to do to survive so she may as well take pleasure in the action of doing so.

"Euff, a rough example but it pretty much sums it up. But you have to remember that Alice isn't exactly normal so her view is a little skewed. Most Hunters get used to the fighting but it's a barrier not everyone can surpass." Ria chuckled.

Time passed by quickly as the beasts were taken out easily with Ria guarding the carriage. Alice spent most of her time resting while Ria talked with Carter and soon, they arrived at the city surrounding Blackrock Castle.

Chapter 138 - 138: Arriving At Blackrock City

Blackrock Castle is a large fortress located in the centre of the city. Even from the outside, Ria and Alice could see large cannons mounted to the walls of the castle and towers filled with roaming guards.

The Castle was surrounded by a large protective wall that led out to a plaza with a statue mounted in the middle. There was a single main road leading from the plaza to the entrance of the city and countless houses decorated the sides. Shopkeepers and a myriad of stalls lined up along the street as this city seemed to be home to civilians rather than Hunters.

There was another large open space in front of the main entrance, showing a large fountain with civilians walking by and giving a prayer.

"The city is called Blackrock City but most know it by the Castle as the lord there has been protecting this land for generations now." Carter explained as they were queuing up to enter the city. There were guards stationed at the entrance who would examine your identity before letting you enter.

"I see... What are they even fighting out here? Or it is just stray beasts and whatnot?" Ria asked curiously while inspecting the towering city walls.

"In the past, there used to be skirmishes between Blackrock Castle and Cult members who were situated near this place as most of the people in Blackrock Castle believe in the Church of the Sun. However, in recent years, it's been rather peaceful with no battles to date." Carter explained while handing the guards his identification.

Once all three of them had been checked, they were allowed into the city.

Sitting up, Alice glanced towards the statue placed above the fountain. It depicted a tall muscular man clad in heavy armour, markings around the corners of his eyes and the crest of a blazing sun in the middle of his forehead and long hair that reached to his waist.

In his hand, he wielded a large spear that contained the same crest that could be seen on his forehead.

Despite this being the first time seeing this statue, Alice felt a sense of anger and hatred well up within her as she wished for nothing but to smash that Statue to pieces.

Furrowing her brows, Alice closed her eyes and took a deep breath before opening her eyes once more and the feeling faded.

'Was that Cayla? Or was it Allura's master?' Alice thought to herself. She noticed that there were moments where emotions that belonged to Allura's master would leak into her mind. Whether that was a side effect of having Cayla or not, Alice didn't know.

'Though it seems like there's some bad blood between this person and Allura's old master.'

"Carter, do you know who the statue is depicting?" Alice asked as her eyes remained on the statue.

"He's a rather famous figure of the Church of the Sun. It's the god that they worship, the Sun God Solaris." Carter answered as Alice memorised that name.

In the future, when she is able to learn more about the kingdom of Ayr, Allura's master and the forgotten era, she wanted to see what kind of connection the Sun God had with Allura's master.

After all, to have invoked such anger and hatred from residual spirit, he must've been a menace towards her.

"Are you curious about the Sun Worshipers?" Ria raised an eyebrow since she was surprised that Alice was showing such interest.

"Not really. Just curious as to who the statue was of. Say, do you think they saw the God himself if they carved a statue like this?"

"Er... That's a good question. I know the Gods exist but I'm not sure how they got the depictions of their god. Maybe they showed up in the past?" Ria shrugged, looking towards Carter for answers but he too was clueless on the matter.

Steering the carriage through the city, Carter arrived at the stables that weren't too far from the entrance and paid the stablemaster some silver.

"I'll be selling the parts of the beast to the Hunters Guild, I can also give you the gold I owe you since you saved my life." Carter smiled as he prepared to carry the bags but Alice and Ria were a step faster.

"We can carry it don't worry." Ria reassured. She didn't reject the money since they needed some extra travel funds with her being unsure of how far they needed to go to reach Luke.

Leading them through the city, Carter explained some of the popular stalls that had been set up along with the locations of some Hunter focused facilities such as Abyss Blood stores and blacksmiths.

As they approached the Hunter's Guild, it was not the magnificent spectacle they are used to in Zdash but rather a humble building in comparison. It had two floors with the first being a mix between the hall and reception.

As for the second floor, it was for the Branch Manager along with private rooms for discussing important information with certain clients.

Upon bringing the carcass of the beast, Ria took this time to update her ID with her having achieved a fourth Sigil.

She needed to take a test to be properly registered as a four star Hunter by the Guild standards.

"Do you want to watch or explore the city a little?" Ria asked curiously since it was going to take a while before an examiner was ready to see if she was prepared.

"Hmm... I think I'll look around for a bit. I want to see some of the blacksmiths and if they can repair my gloves or not." Alice shook her head.

It's not like they were going to leave this city in the meantime so splitting up shouldn't be an issue even with Ria's directional sense.

"Alright. Where do you want to meet back up?"

"At the statue place. It's hard to miss even if you get lost." Alice smirked.

Before she could hear Ria's reply, Alice had jogged off already as they split ways with Carter as well. After all, he was there to bring them to this city and show them to the Hunter's Guild.

As Alice jogged away from the Hunter's Guild, she glanced into her money pouch and counted her share of gold.

'With this, I have around 14 gold pieces now. That beast was surprisingly rewarding.' Alice mused to herself as she stretched her body and walked around the city at her own pace.

In the weeks she had spent with Ria out in the wilds, she was given time to think about herself.

While she knew her final goal was to erase her old family and help Allura rebuild Ayr, she needed something to live for aside from these. Fighting was enjoyable to an extent but only because she had to fight no matter what. It was not what she or rather, Ria, would call a hobby.

In Ria's words, she classed her own enjoyment for fighting as a hobby because she treated it as an art. She enjoyed studying the fighting forms and history behind these forms while for Alice, it was merely for survival.

"A hobby huh? What do I even want to do." Alice sighed while walking to some of the stalls.

However, feeling the glances that were being sent her way, Alice understood that she wasn't exactly dressed to impress hence some of the sellers may be less inclined to trade with her.

Looking at her tattered sleeve, Alice scratched her hair before sighing.

She didn't have enough money to purchase a proper Hunter's attire but purchasing some civilian clothing should be fine.

She remembered how Ria would buy clothes that she would consider to be cute despite their disadvantages in battle.

Just as she thought of this, a bitter smile appeared on Alice's face.

"Right... Lilia wanted to visit some clothing shops when we left the arena. She wanted to buy some cute clothes while I wanted to read some stories on Hunters." Alice muttered.

She didn't have anything to remember Lilia by except for her memories.

With no memento other than her own memories, Alice decided to honour Lilia through her actions instead.

"Let's buy some cute clothes then I suppose." Alice smiled softly, walking through the streets in hopes of finding a tailor who sold cheap yet cute clothing that she could afford with her current funds.

'I can spare roughly 4 gold for clothing which I think should be fine. Allura mentioned that the standard family gets by with 10 gold per week, surely clothes shouldn't cost that much right?'

However, thinking back to how expensive her current attire was, Alice couldn't help but shiver at the thought.

"Maybe I need to take some bounties from the Guild to fund this purchase." She muttered, once again realising the importance of money. She lamented the fact that Allura had confiscated their original funds due to the fact that it was payment from Neal to commission Allura and Gin's help.

Walking through the street, she noticed something strange off to the side. There was a huddle of what seemed to be Hunters surrounding the alley grinning while kicking something.

Her curiosity got the better of her as she wandered over, glancing over their shoulders and noticed that they were kicking a scarred man with horns and scales across their body. He was shielding his head while laying down in a foetal position while suffering from the abuse.

Scratching her cheek, Alice noticed that he had 4 stars above his head yet the abusers only had three.

'Why is he letting them hit him like this? Well it's none of my problem but...' Alice thought to herself and noticed that there were two shadows belonging to people hiding around a corner. Judging from the shadow, she could tell they were young.

Sighing softly, Alice opened her mouth.

"Can I ask why you're kicking him? I don't think he serves as a good challenge compared to beasts no?"

"Hm? It's none of your concern. Though I suppose we are attracting a bit too much attention even if he is a half beast. Come on guys let's go." The man in the lead gestured as they walked off, making sure to bump into Alice on the way out.

"Weirdos." Alice shrugged as she walked over to the man.

Just as she was about to help him up, she understood why they had called him a half beast.

In addition to the horns and scales, his body was suffering from the late stage effects of Abyss Blood usages to the point he was now half man half beast.

Chapter 139 - 139: Half Beast

Shirking away from her hand momentarily, the man leaned against the wall.

"Thank you." He groaned out as he hastily limped towards the alleys. Just as he was about to fall over, Alice grabbed his arms and helped him up.

"I'm just someone who came from outside this city. Let me help you back." Alice offered as she felt bad seeing him suffering from both his injuries and the side effects of his Abyss Blood.

"Ah... Thank you. But really, you shouldn't deal with exiles like me. The people of this city wouldn't look kindly upon you." The man smiled bitterly as two young children ran out from their hiding spot and hugged the old man.

They looked to be younger than ten years old yet their body were also disfigured with horns and scales.

"Why?" Alice furrowed her brows. While it was indeed pitiful to see someone suffering from Abyss Blood, she didn't see it as a reason to abuse them in the way the Hunters had done earlier.

"Because we're now impure. These horns, these scales, they don't belong to man. To them, I'm no better than a beast. Please, for your own safety, allow me to go back with my children." The man pleaded as Alice sighed and let go of him, allowing him to walk away with his family.

Watching him disappear into the alley, Alice noticed that several others were peaking at her through half closed windows and they seemed to be suffering from other side effects similar to the old man.

'Is this where they throw all the people who have visible side effects?' Alice thought to herself with a slight frown.

However, this was none of her business. Considering the state of this alley, it seems like this is a long held belief the city holds and one that keeps them away from the public eye.

'Is it a belief of those that follow the Church of the Sun or just how people are in general?' Alice sighed as she turned away from the alley.

Stepping out, she noticed that a few people shot her disgusted glances and whispered to one another while pointing at her.

Ignoring these glances, Alice made her way through the streets in search of a clothing store.

Thankfully, it didn't take long for her to find a store with what seemed to be affordable clothing from what she could see on display.

Granted, these outfits were still rather expensive at 6 gold pieces for the full attire, a little over the budget she had set herself.

However, she couldn't keep walking around in half torn up clothing or else she'd attract too many eyes to her.

After perusing the store, she chose a simple yet cute outfit by her own standards. It consisted of a black shirt and shorts, a pair of tights and white knee high boots. The main attraction of the outfit was the large jacket that could be either worn like usual or off shoulder as there was a clip to keep it attached to her shirt without it falling off.

Walking around for a bit, Alice was satisfied with her outfit and also bought a bag to keep her old attire. After all, she wanted to get it fixed by Sera since it's a durable outfit and it felt good to move in.

The outfit she had just bought was mostly for walking through the city without fighting in mind.

Adjusting the bag on her back, Alice doubled checked to make sure she didn't leave anything and left the store.

Her second agenda now was to buy a storybook on Hunters since she remembered that she had enjoyed them when she was younger. Perhaps seeing one would rekindle those feelings in her chest and act as a hobby.

With plenty of time on her hands, Alice wandered wherever interested her and enjoyed her time browsing the stalls.

Before she knew it, hours had passed and she was now holding a bag of books, detailing the adventures of famous Hunters. Naturally, they have been adjusted to exclude the gory details and only wrote about the pride and honor strong Hunters received from each kill.

Sitting down on a bench by the plaza, Alice leaned back and crossed her legs before placing the books beside her.

With Ria taking her time with the exam and not arriving at the plaza yet, Alice figured that she had a bit of time to enjoy her books.

She felt like she had forgotten something but if she didn't remember it then it probably wasn't important enough.

What was important for her right now was to enjoy her books.

However, before she could start, she wanted some snacks and a drink to enjoy while reading.

Thankfully, there was a vendor nearby that was selling some kind of skewer with mushrooms, vegetables and some meat along with an assortment of drinks displayed on the table.

Purchasing a drink and a plate of skewers, Alice sat down and enjoyed her books.

As she was reading through the contents, she wasn't sure about some of the stories it had told. After going through some hunts herself, she knew that some of these were exaggerated and boasted about the luxurious life a Hunter led. Yet she couldn't stop herself from reading as there was nothing else to do.

One of the books was even strange as it detailed a gruesome battle of fear and panic for the beast rather than the Hunter. How it would try to dodge yet spikes would always appear between its legs.

A few would even detail the Hunter dragging 'souls' from the body and trapping it in a lantern to be resummoned later.

'Can Sigils even accomplish a feat like this? What's stopping them from just taking the soul of a powerful Hunter?' Alice wondered to herself while flipping through the pages.

While absorbed in reading, she didn't notice Ria approaching and hitting her on the head gently.

"!!!" Jumping up in shock, Alice glanced up and saw Ria who seemed a little messier than usual.

"Finished?" Alice asked, closing her book and placing them into her bag.

"Yep. I got my four star license now. The battle was a bit annoying but it was pretty easy. The hard part was waiting for the damn instructor to arrive." Ria sighed.

"But enough about me, you went clothes shopping and didn't even tell me urg. If you had told me I would've gone with you and helped you pick an outfit but this one is cute too. What books were you reading?" Ria asked curiously as she sat down next to Alice.

"Nothing too interesting. Just story books about Hunters. I remember I used to enjoy them when I was younger so I figured I'll give it a go again." Alice shrugged.

"I see... We'll I might have a read myself if you say you enjoyed them. But considering how you got the outfit and books I'm assuming the blacksmiths couldn't fix your gloves. Though I suppose that's to be expected because Allura had asked a friend of her's to commission such a thing."

Hearing this, Alice was silent as she finally remembered what she was supposed to do. She had gotten distracted with wanting to find a hobby along with reading that fixing her glove completely slipped her mind.

". . . I still haven't gone to the blacksmiths yet. I forgot." Alice replied awkwardly as she didn't expect herself to get distracted so much.

"Wait... how much gold do you have left?"

Holding up 3 fingers, Alice smiled meekly.

"3 gold?!" Ria was speechless as she didn't expect everything to cost 11 gold in total.

"Ahem. The books were a little more expensive than I thought and I had bought a few." Alice explained while Ria didn't know what to say.

Not only did they need travel funds but they also needed money to fix their gear. With Alice only having 3 gold left, they would need to stay in this city for longer than they expected to earn some money.

"We'll need some funds for an Inn tonight unless you want to sleep in the streets. Sigh... I'll do some clothes shopping tomorrow I guess or get an easy job at the Guild. Thankfully, more opportunities have opened up since I got my four star license including some work in the city." Ria sighed.

"Sorry..."

"Don't worry though. I have a better idea on how we can earn some money." Ria grinned as Alice had a bad feeling in her heart but her curiosity got the better of her.

"What do you have in mind?"

"I'll tell you later. Let's find an Inn first. Once we get our rooms, we'll go earn some quick coin." Ria chuckled as she dragged Alice with her to find an Inn as quickly as possible.

In the end, they settled with an Inn called the Crowned Hero that cost 20 Silver per night with breakfast and dinner included. Not only was the price affordable for them, but it was also close to the plaza where it leads to a majority of the main buildings within this city.

Now that their place of residency has been secured, Ria had Alice leave her books in her room before dragging her away.

"Can you at least tell me where we're going first?" Alice sighed as she wanted a rough idea so she could prepare herself.

Considering how Ria called it quick coin, it was most likely something dangerous.

"Don't worry, just follow me since I've done this a few times." Ria reassured with a grin.

Hearing that this was something Ria had some several times, the bad feeling in Alice's chest manifested itself again as she recalled one situation that Allura had warned her about.

And as expected, her fears came true after seeing their destination.

It was the fighting ring where you could gamble on who won.

"I'll join a few fights myself and our coin purses will be full in no time." Ria chuckled as she couldn't wait to enter.

"Didn't Allura mention that she had to bust you out last time because they wouldn't let you leave?" Alice frowned but Ria shook her finger.

"But that was BEFORE I got my resonance. Don't worry, I'll keep it low key."

Seeing that there was no changing Ria's mind, Alice sighed and nodded her head.

Chapter 140 - 140: Gambling Arena

The layout of the arena was simple and located underground. It was a large empty space surrounded by seats for the audience along with a large board showing the fighters as well as the betting odds.

Not only that, but there were also pillars that would drop down into the arena filled with weapons to spice up certain battles.

"The rules of battle within this arena are pretty simple. Basically, the first person to knock out their opponent wins or until the opponent cannot fight further. Obviously, there would be issues if the fight becomes lethal which is why they have guards around the place." Ria explained as she rubbed her hands together excitedly.

The price for entering as a contestant is pretty cheap so long as you have a Hunters Guild ID so they can check how strong you are. It only costs 50 silver to enter with the chance to earn back 10 times the amount. Naturally, you can raise your own price to earn more back but there is a limit.

"Which is why I want you to bet on my victory with some of the Gold I give you. That way I only need to fight once and we'll be pretty much set." Ria winked as she handed Alice some Gold before making her way to the reception.

While Ria was registering herself as a contestant, Alice glanced down at the arena curiously as two people were fighting already.

One had 3 Sigils while the other had 4 yet the three Sigil user was winning.

'Is the four star Hunter holding back? He's not even using his third Sigil.' Alice thought to herself as it seemed unnatural.

It didn't take long for the three star Hunter to win as he was able to land a good blow against the other, sending him crashing into the walls.

Hearing the lamenting cries of the audience across the stands, Alice understood that they must've betted on the four star Hunter and lost their gold.

"Hmm... Is it rigged?" Alice muttered while leaning against the railings.

She was currently resting her chin on her palms while watching the next match.

Over the course of 5 fights, she noticed that a few of them involved one of the contestants holding back without using their full power.

"I'm back. I got myself a fight though the odds aren't very high so even if I win I won't get much. They don't have many four star Hunters fighting tonight so I'm not going to earn a lot." Ria sighed as she stood next to Alice.

"Whatcha doin'?" Ria asked, glancing down at the arena.

"Just watching. Seems like some of the fights are rigged. I've noticed several that aren't using their full power."

"Well of course. Though they usually don't make it obvious. After all, the house needs to earn some money too." Ria shrugged since this was standard practice. For regulars, they would notice the general strength of some of the contestants and understand when they might lose while newcomers would get scammed by the information they learn.

In their eyes, a four star Hunter should win against a three star. But the reality is the two contestants are both hired by the house to 'perform' for the night which is why contestants like Ria were usually unwelcomed or forced to fight someone much stronger to guarantee a loss.

"So who's your opponent?"

"Another four star Hunter. They have wind type abilities and can set up bombs. He's going to be fast, but I doubt he's faster than me." Ria reassured while patting her chest.

"Should I keep betting on you or just let things play out?"

"Don't bet for now. The odds are too low. If we bet too much and win a lot we'll have to fight our way out." Ria shrugged since that was the case last time.

She had continuously betted on herself throughout the night and the audience during that day did the same, forcing the house to lose a lot of coin hence why they wanted to force her to lose the next match.

But this time, she was going to be careful by 'barely' winning her fights. That is why the audience wouldn't know that she was a guaranteed victory and the house wouldn't lose too much money while she earned their travel funds.

"Alright. I'll find a place to sit down for now then, it's not like I have anything else to do." Alice nodded as there were plenty of seats available as tonight seemed to be a rather quiet night. If she knew that this was the case, she would've brought along her books while she waited.

"Why don't you fight a round or two? I doubt anyone without a resonance can beat you in a fight."

"Flames are too weird. Might attract too much attention." Alice waved her hand dismissively since fighting in the middle of this large crowd while displaying the strange attributes of her power would raise many questions.

What kind of beast did Alice kill for these flames?

Why can she stop Sigil powers?

If they begin to ask these questions, rumours will begin to spread and that was not something that Alice wanted.

"That's true." Ria nodded since Alice wasn't wrong.

With Alice finding a spot to sit down, Ria made her way to the contestant's area and waited for her turn patiently.

Now it was simply a matter of passing time and Alice decided to use this moment to eavesdrop on the conversations around her.

Most of the conversations around her were about the fights happening in the arena and how some of the fighters were clearly 'under the weather' and fighting worse than usual.

However, there was one conversation that caught her attention and it was a discussion regarding the slums of this city.

"Oi did you hear? There are more guards around the slums now. Do you think the half beasts did something to piss off the city lord?"

"Of course they did. Have you not seen them? It's no wonder they'll try something shady to get revenge on us even though it's their fault for abusing the blood. They can only blame themselves."

"Some of the guards were wearing masks and stuff, I wonder what's that about."

"Don't think about it too much. I'm sure the city lord has it covered."

Raising her eyebrow, Alice frowned slightly as this was news to her.

'Guards are wearing masks? I don't think I saw many guards today, were they busy with the slums?' Alice thought to herself as she couldn't help but wonder what happened to the old man and his two children that she had run into earlier today.

'There will probably be some news tomorrow.'

Shaking her head, Alice glanced down at the arena and saw that it was now Ria's turn.

Her opponent, like her, is a four star Hunter. With him being a wind type user that focuses on speed, he made sure to wear very little armour so that it won't hinder him. As for Ria, she seemed rather relaxed.

"Would you like the first move or shall I?" Ria taunted with a confident smile.

Hearing this, the man frowned as he took a deep breath to maintain his composure.

In the time it took for this round to begin, they had done as much research as possible. She was simply a new four star Hunter that used lightning to make ranged attacks. She had barely defeated the instructor to get her licence earlier today.

'Seems like she's still on a high after getting promoted to four stars. The fact that she came here right after getting her license means she's clearly overconfident in her abilities.' The man thought to himself crouched down and activated his Sigils. Three markings appeared on his body as he waited for the bell to toll, signaling the start of their battle.

*DING!

Hearing the bell, light turquoise energy erupted from his body as he rushed forward. The energy manifested into swords that hovered around him as he sent them towards Ria, hoping to grab her attention.

Seeing this, Ria simply chuckled as she leaned back lightly and aimed her finger before flicking.

*BANG!!!!

A bolt of lightning shot out, jumping from one sword to another before aiming towards the man's back but he managed to dodge at the last second.

"Ohya? You dodged that. Congrats." Ria laughed. She knew it was customary for the betting house to do some research hence why her battle at the Guild took longer than usual.

She was hiding her strength as it had always been her goal to do a little gambling at a city. Without Allura watching over her, she'll be allowed to gamble to her hearts content.

While she was primarily a physical fighter, using lightning was still part of her skill set!

Curling her lips into a grin, Ria raised her right hand before snapping her fingers, conjuring a wave of lightning bolts to descend upon the area.

The noise of rumbling thunder crashed through the arena as the bystanders who weren't interested in this fight started to pay attention.

"ARG!!! Dammit!" The man's voice rang out as a gust of wind pushed aside the dust, revealing that he had been forced into using his resonance.

Black and green plated armour appeared around his arms, legs and chest while a tattered cape fluttered behind him. In his hands were two daggers that radiated green energy as he glared at Ria.

He didn't expect her firepower to be so strong that he was forced into using his resonance so soon.

If he didn't, he wouldn't been struck by one of the bolts and taken heavy damage.

"Resonance so soon? If you use your resonance against my warm up how do you expect to dodge this?"
Ria asked as she pointed to the spark of lightning hovering above her finger.

Widening his eyes, he was about to move when Ria flicked her finger and the spark transformed into a spear.

*BANG!!!

Shielding his face, the man could feel cold sweat dripping down his back as the spear stopped just before colliding against his arm. Even though he wasn't hit, he knew that he wasn't fast enough to dodge such an attack and the power it radiated... One hit would be enough to knock him out!

With the referee quickly declaring Ria's victory, Ria turned to Alice and gave her a victory sign with her fingers and a wide grin.

Seeing this, Alice couldn't help but chuckle since it was clear that Ria was going to scam as much gold as she could, considering the fact that she didn't even move from her initial spot.